

Hiroshige's Landscapes



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Masterworks of
Hiroshige's
Landscapes

RONIN GALLERY

425 Madison Ave. New York, NY 10017

The Largest Collection of Japanese Prints in the U.S.
Contemporary Asian Art

November 2014

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HIROSHIGE

1797 - 1858

In the history of ukiyo-e, there is one name above all others that evokes the tender, lyrical beauty of the Japanese landscape – Hiroshige. Beloved the world over, Hiroshige's inspired portrayals of the natural world have earned him such epithets as the “poet of travel” and the “artist of rain.” Those prints containing an image from his famous trilogy – moon, snow, rain – remain unsurpassed examples of their kind. “In special atmospheric effects, such as moonlight, snow, mist, and rain,” remarked Fenollosa, “Hiroshige achieved a verity of effects such as neither Greek nor European has ever known.” His most well known landscape series – The 53 Stations of the Tokaido, The 100 Famous Views of Edo, The Famous Views of the Sixty-Odd Provinces, and The 36 Views of Mt Fuji – stand as enduring testimony to the magic that Hiroshige worked with water and light, rock and foam, cloud and cliff.

Ronin Gallery is pleased to present a collection of landscape prints selected from Hiroshige's most famous masterpiece series. This exhibition will celebrate this artist's bold, daring compositions and dynamic explorations of perspective, and will focus on Hiroshige's innovative use of cropping, diagonal compositions, and exaggerated perspective as a way to illustrate and express not only the natural beauty of Japan, but also the dynamism of the everyday lives of its citizens.

Hiroshige was born in the city of Edo, the lively, flourishing hub of Japan's merchant class. Hiroshige's family was historically part of a class of urban low-ranking samurai, who were charged with the duty of fighting fires in the community surrounding Edo Castle. Despite the apparent danger and excitement of this familial role, the occupation actually afforded a young Hiroshige with a great deal of free time, which he quickly filled with the amateur study of art. However, in his twelfth year, a double tragedy befell him: his father died, and then a few months later, his mother followed. This sud-



Memorial portrait of Hiroshige by Toyokuni III.
Published in 1858 by Uwoei.

den blow devastated him, and we can trace its lasting influence in those prints where he endows nature with all the poignant sadness of the human condition. At the age of fifteen, Hiroshige entered the studio of Toyohiro to begin formal study, and within a year he had so excelled in his work that he was granted the privilege of using his master's name. Combining the last part of Toyohiro's name with another character of his own, he began signing his works “Hiroshige” – a signature that was destined to appear on some of the world's masterpieces. Little more is known about Hiroshige's personal life, except that he married twice—his first wife died young in 1838—and had one daughter, Tatsu, who would eventually marry Hiroshige's pupil Shigenobu (Hiroshige II).

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, the Shogunate relaxed centuries-old restrictions and unfettered travel for large numbers of people became possible. A new genre of “travel art” sprang up overnight, and Hiroshige became especially drawn to a subset of this genre, known as meisho-e, or

pictures of famous places. He even traveled the length of the Tokaido Road in 1832 as part of an official delegation from Edo to the imperial capital of Kyoto, a journey quickly becoming known for its celebrated vistas. He was so inspired by his experience of the varied and beautiful landscape of his homeland that immediately upon his return, he began to transform his numerous sketches into designs for full-color prints – prints that would become the incomparable 53 Stations of the Tokaido.

In popular imagination, these famous sites of travel were closely associated with legend, poetry, and myth. It was a genre whose traditional themes—the beauty of the seasons and the daily tasks of common people—had always been close to Hiroshige's artistic soul. Sales of Hiroshige's landscapes, already substantial, soared to unprecedented heights with the production of these new travel and landscape series. His creative energy rarely faltered, and Edo's crowds continued to thrill to his deft touch and quick eye, his fresh intimate handling of the locale and his affectionate treatment of the subject matter.

In 1853, at the apex of Hiroshige's artistic career, Commodore Perry and his black ships sailed into the Yokohama harbor, heralding a new and momentous exchange of culture between East and West. While new forms of Western visuality were curious and inspiring to Japanese artists of the period, at the same time, Europe's rising generation

of artists incorporated the new conceptions of space and form that they found in Hiroshige's prints, revitalizing the art of Europe. Monet was entranced

by Hiroshige's designs of the drum bridges at Meguro and Kameido Tenjin Shrine, going so far as to build a small version of the bridge in his own gardens which then were featured in so many of his famous water lily paintings. Edouard Manet was obviously influenced by the series The Sixty-odd Provinces in his painting Ships at Sunset; Van Gogh owned over twenty-five of Hiroshige's prints and reproduced several as oil paint-

ings; Toulouse-Lautrec was fascinated with Hiroshige's daring diagonal compositions and inventive use of perspective. For these artists and many others, Hiroshige's bold cropping of planes, dramatic truncation of objects, and exhilarating leaps of viewpoint heralded an unprecedented approach to composition. By the end of the nineteenth century, the new visual vocabulary that Hiroshige had made available to Europe's artists had helped to catalyze a revolution in aesthetic sensibility that we now call Impressionism and Post-Impressionism.

Throughout his career, Hiroshige transformed the themes, techniques, and style of ukiyo-e printmaking. And, as an incredibly prolific artist, he produced over 5,000 individual print designs, more than 2,000 of which belong to the views and great traveling roads of Edo-period Japan. This wholehearted discovery of the landscape and the role of travel in the lives of Edo-period citizens reinvigorated an old and mostly Sinophilic subject: Hiroshige's best landscape masterpieces are imbued with both the poetry of the past and the lively, particular energy of the time. Hiroshige's ability to create designs that convey an intimacy of the travel experience and the palpable atmosphere of each specific season is unsurpassed, even to this day.

In 1856, after decades of popular success and acclaim, Hiroshige became a Buddhist monk at the age of 60, retiring all his other duties in the world. However, he still produced his most acclaimed print series during this time—the 100 Famous Views of Edo—which

was fully financed by a wealthy Buddhist priest. Then, in the summer of 1858, cholera raged through the streets of Edo; some say as

many as 28,000 perished in its wake. While designing this series, The 36 Views of Mt Fuji, Hiroshige too fell victim to the illness, and on the sixth day of the ninth lunar month, he died. An accomplished poet, Hiroshige left the following lines to mark his farewell: "Leaving my brush on the Azuma road, I go to see the famous sights/ Of the Western Paradise."

*"Leaving my brush on the Azuma road
I go to see the famous sights
Of the Western Paradise."*

MAJOR LANDSCAPE SERIES

The 53 Stations of the Tokaido

The 53 Stations of the Tokaido was a series of 55 prints designed by Hiroshige in 1832-1833, celebrating a newfound love of travel in Edo-period Japan. The Tokaido was the main road between the imperial capital of Kyoto and the Shogun's administrative capital in the city of Edo. Thousands of people travelled this road, stopping at the 53 rest stations that graced its length. Every one of these stations boasted great scenic beauty, with spectacular views of the sea and the mountains. Hiroshige himself traveled the length of the Tokaido in 1832 as part of an official delegation to the Shogun in Edo, and he was so inspired by the changing landscape that immediately he began to turn his numerous sketches into designs for full-color prints. Many of the innovative and exciting designs from this series are counted among Hiroshige's most precious and important masterpieces.

Hiroshige's first edition of the 53 Stations (now known as the "Hoeido," after the main publisher) was so immensely popular that he would eventually publish over three-dozen versions of the Tokaido stations in his lifetime. Other versions of the Tokaido series consist of additional print formats: the "Upright" Tokaido (1855), in the vertical oban format, the aiban format of the Gyosho Tokaido (from the early 1840s), and several designs from the various chuban format prints that Hiroshige completed between the early 1830s and the 1850s.

Hoeido Tokaido Series

Date: 1832-1833

Publisher: Takenouchi Magohachi (Hoeido)

Format: Oban yoko-e

Number of Prints: 55

Gyosho Tokaido Series

Date: 1841-1842

Publisher: Ezakiya Tatsuzo (Sengyokudo)

Format: Aiban yoko-e

Number of Prints: 55

Upright Tokaido Series

Date: 1855

Publisher: Tsutaya

Format: Oban tate-e

Number of Prints: 55

The Famous Views of the Sixty-Odd Provinces

From 1853 - 1856 Hiroshige designed The Famous Views of the Sixty-Odd Provinces. It is interesting to note that the arrival of Commodore Perry's black ships and the forced opening of Japan to the West in 1853 coincided with the debut of this series. This monumental series presented the first major artistic view of all the provinces of Japan from the Tohoku region in the Northeast to Kyushu in the Southwest. Several of the prints stand as the crowning achievement of his life's work: "Moonlight on Lake Biwa," a stunning vista of serene power and beauty; "Gokanoshō, Higo Province," an isolated kingdom of mountains and clouds; "Sarashina, Shinano Province," with its mesmerizing reflections of the moon on terraced rice paddies; and "Naruto Whirlpool," with its mighty hypnotic swirl of sea and foam. The landscapes in this series represent the full range of Hiroshige's genius. Suffused with color, they render the seasonal variety of nature in all of its breathtaking splendor.

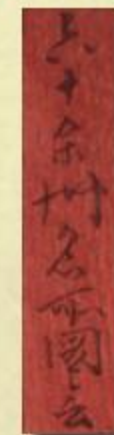
The Famous Views of the Sixty-Odd Provinces

Date: 1853-1856

Publisher: Koshimuraya Heisuke (Koshihei)

Format: Oban tate-e

Number of Prints: 69



The 100 Famous Views of Edo

The One Hundred Famous Views of Edo was designed and published from February 1856 through August 1858. The prints depict the various seasons, sites, annual events, and customs of the flourishing city of Edo. Many of the designs from this series are considered to be masterpieces of Hiroshige's career, as well as masterpieces of world art in general. The series was originally intended as 100 prints, but was so popular that Hiroshige continued to produce Edo designs until his death in 1858. The designs from this series were sought after in 19th-century European art circles as the enthusiasm for "Japonisme" gripped the city of Paris. The iconic images from the One Hundred Famous Views of Edo series were inspirational for artists like Monet, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh, and Whistler, more so than any other landscape series that Hiroshige designed in his lifetime. Van Gogh even directly copied two prints from this series as oil paintings: the Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi and Atake and Plum Park in Kameido.

The 100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1856-1858

Publisher: Uoya Eikichi

Format: Oban tate-e

Number of Prints: 118



The 36 Views of Mount Fuji

Before his death in 1858, Hiroshige completed this masterpiece series: The 36 Views of Mt Fuji. This series of 36 prints (plus the title page) were published by Tsutaya. A preface to the series on the title page includes the following excerpt written by Santei Shumba: "One day Hiroshige came to the publisher with 'Thirty-six views of Fuji,' which he said was his last work, and asked him to print them. It was the beginning of autumn (i.e. 1858), and at the close of the autumn he died at age 62." The first edition of this series was a memorial publication as an offering of the publisher's sincere respect for Hiroshige. It is extremely rare and exceptionally beautifully printed. All the prints from this early edition are distinguished by their sharp impressions, careful gradations of color, red signature cartouche, and visible woodgrain.

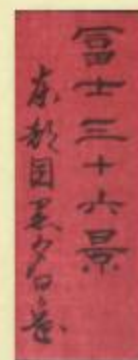
The 36 Views of Mount Fuji

Date: 1859

Publisher: Tsutaya Kichizo
(Koeido)

Format: Oban tate-e

Number of Prints: 36





Hamamatsu

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Hoeido

Date: c.1832

Publisher: Hoeido

Seal: Kiwame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6098



Okabe

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Hoeido

Date: c.1832

Publisher: Hoeido

Seal: Kiwame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6100



Shono

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Hoeido

Date: c.1832

Publisher: Hoeido

Seal: Kiwame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6044



Fujieda

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Hoeido

Date: c.1832

Publisher: Hoeido

Seal: Kiwame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6134



Chiryu

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Hoeido

Date: c.1832

Publisher: Hoeido

Seal: Kiwame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6133



Arai

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Hoeido

Date: c.1832

Publisher: Hoeido

Seal: Kiwame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6130



Tsuchiyama

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Hoeido

Date: c.1832

Publisher: Hoeido

Seal: Kiwame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6131



Kanbara

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Hoeido

Date: c.1832

Publisher: Hoeido

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JPR5584



Ejiri
53 Stations of the Tokaido - Gyosho

Date: c.1842
Seal: Hama
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: Aiban
ref. #: JP6145



Tsuchiyama

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Gyosho

Date: c.1842

Seal: Hama

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: Aiban

ref. #: JP6079



Tororojiru Shop at Mariko

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Upright

Date: 1855

Publisher: Tsutaya

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JPR5480



Numazu

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Upright

Date: 1855

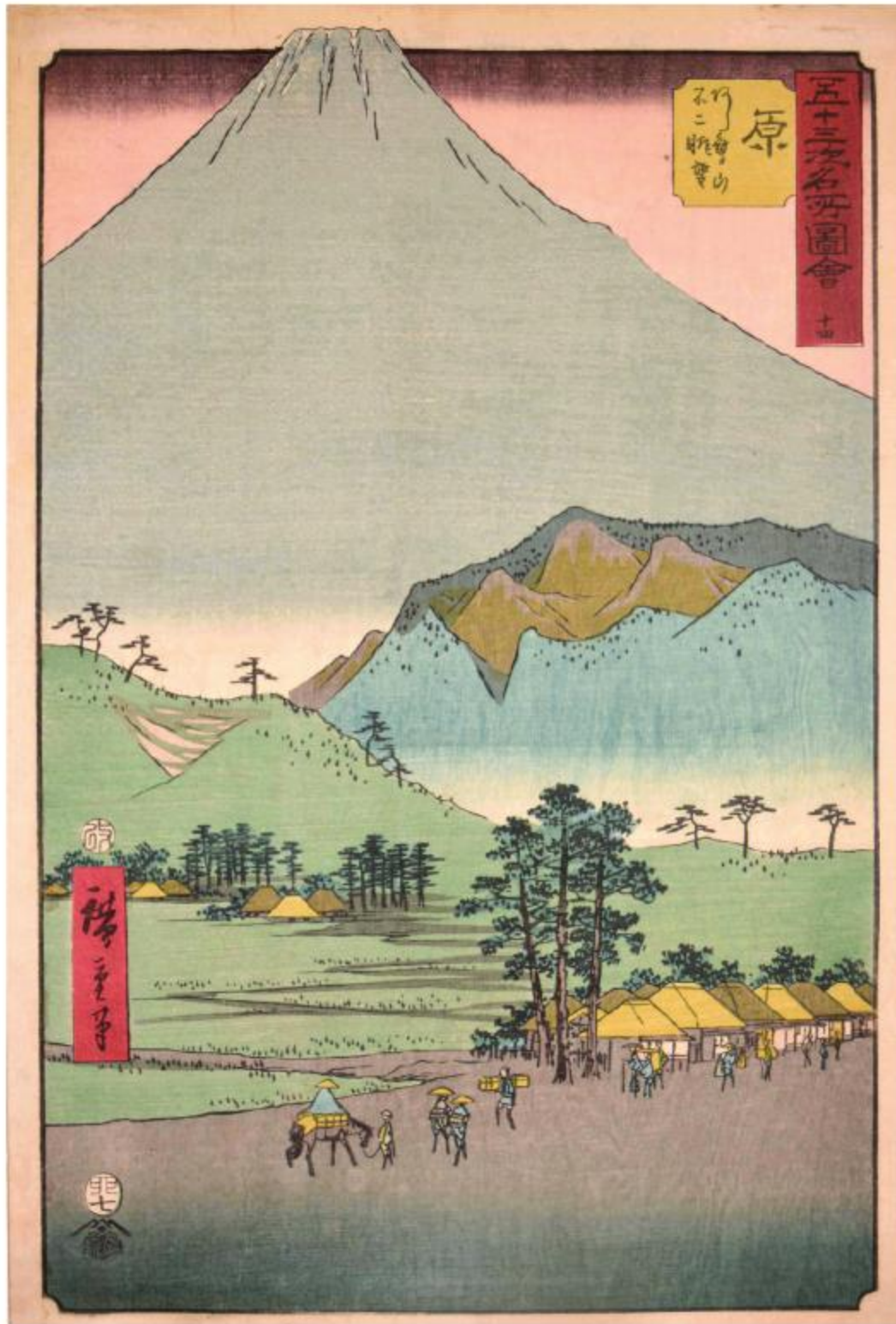
Publisher: Tsutaya

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP5129



Hara

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Upright

Date: 1855

Publisher: Tsutaya

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JPR5124



Fujikawa

53 Stations of the Tokaido - Upright

Date: 1855

Publisher: Tsutaya

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP110865



Spring Rain at Suhara

The 69 Stations of the Kisokaido

Date: c.1838

Publisher: Kinjudo

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JPR5460



Gokei, Bitchu Province

Famous Views of the 60-Odd Provinces

Date: 1853

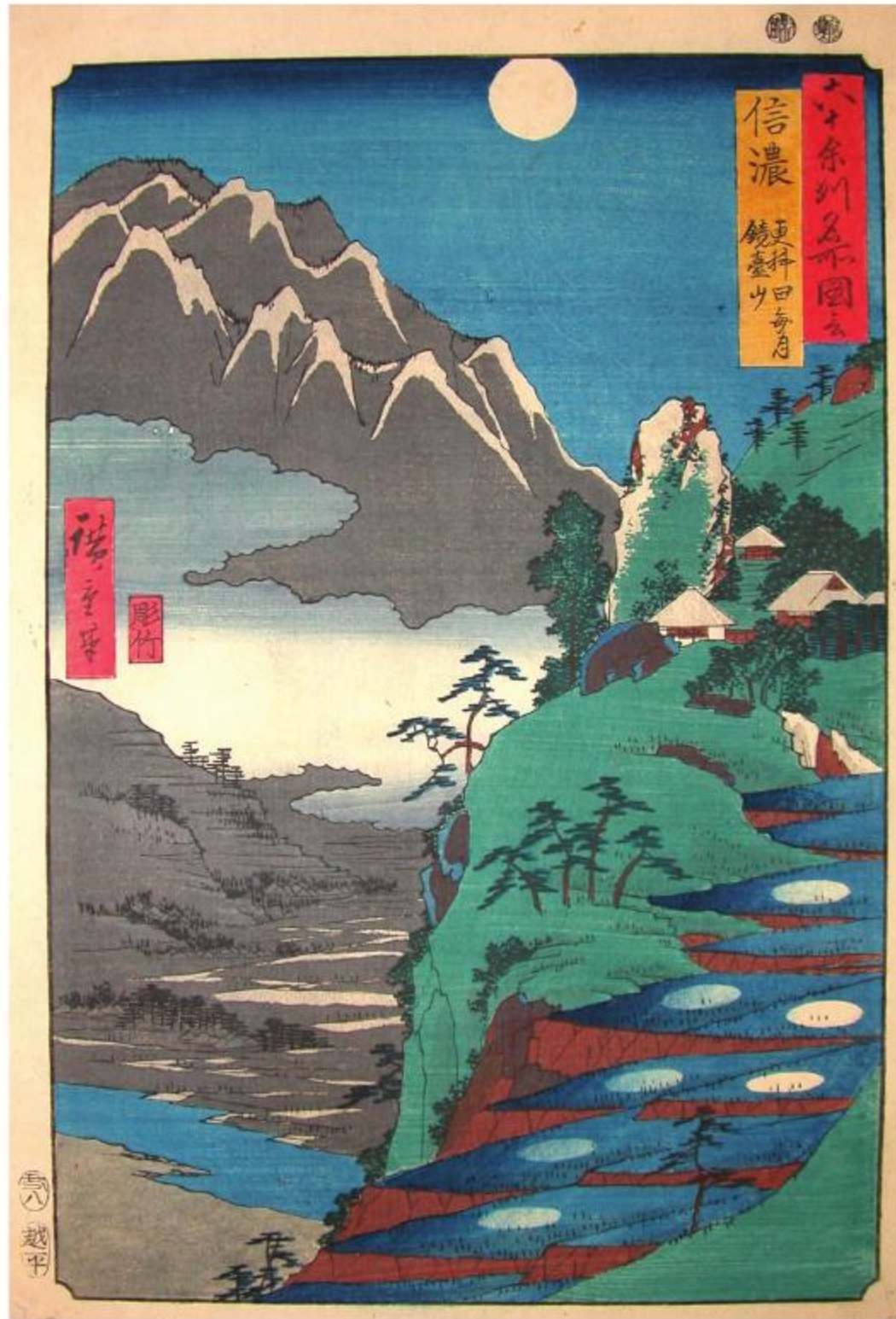
Publisher: Koshihei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP2284



Sarashina, Shinano Province

Famous Views of the 60-Odd Provinces

Date: 1853

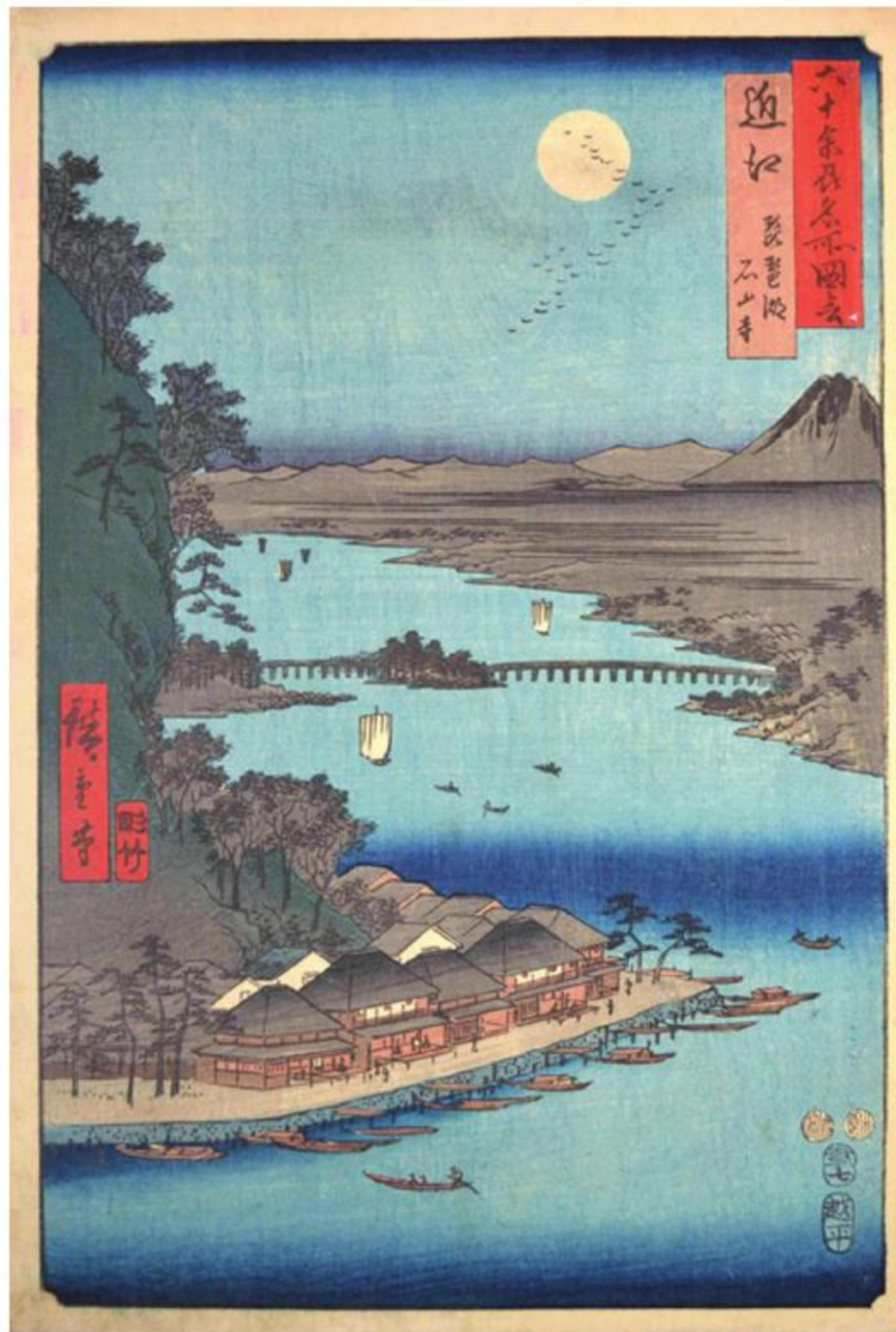
Publisher: Koshihei

Seals: Kinugasa and Murata

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP4004



Ishiyama Temple on Biwa Lake, Omi Province

Famous Views of the 60-Odd Provinces

Date: 1853

Publisher: Koshimuraya Heisuke

Seals: Mera and Watanabe

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP4003



Saruhashi (Monkey Bridge), Kai Province

Famous Views of the 60-Odd Provinces

Date: 1853

Publisher: Koshihei

Seals: Kinugasa and Murata

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6076



Naruto Whirlpools, Awa Province

Famous Views of the 60-Odd Provinces

Date: 1855

Publisher: Koshimuraya Heisuke

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP5365



Kinryuzan Temple at Asakusa

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1856

Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP1591



Tenjin Shrine at Kameido
100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1856
Publisher: Uwoei
Seal: Aratame
Signed: Hiroshige hitsu
Size: O-ban
ref. #: JP6047



Plum Mansion at Kameido

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857

Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6089



Susaki at Jumantsubo, Fukagawa

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857

Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JPR5491



Sudden Shower over Ohashi Bridge and Atake

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857

Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP1615



Chiyogaike Pond, Meguro
100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1856
Publisher: Uwoei
Seal: Aratame
Signed: Hiroshige hitsu
size: O-ban
ref. #: JP5055



Night View of Matsuchiyama and the San'ya Canal

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857

Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signature: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP1579



Horikiri Iris Garden
100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857
Publisher: Uwoei
Seal: Aratame
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. #: JP6052



Ayase River and Kanegafuchi

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857

Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige hitsu

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP00200



Asakusa Ricefield and Torinomachi

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857

Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6097



Atagoshita and Yabu Lane

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857

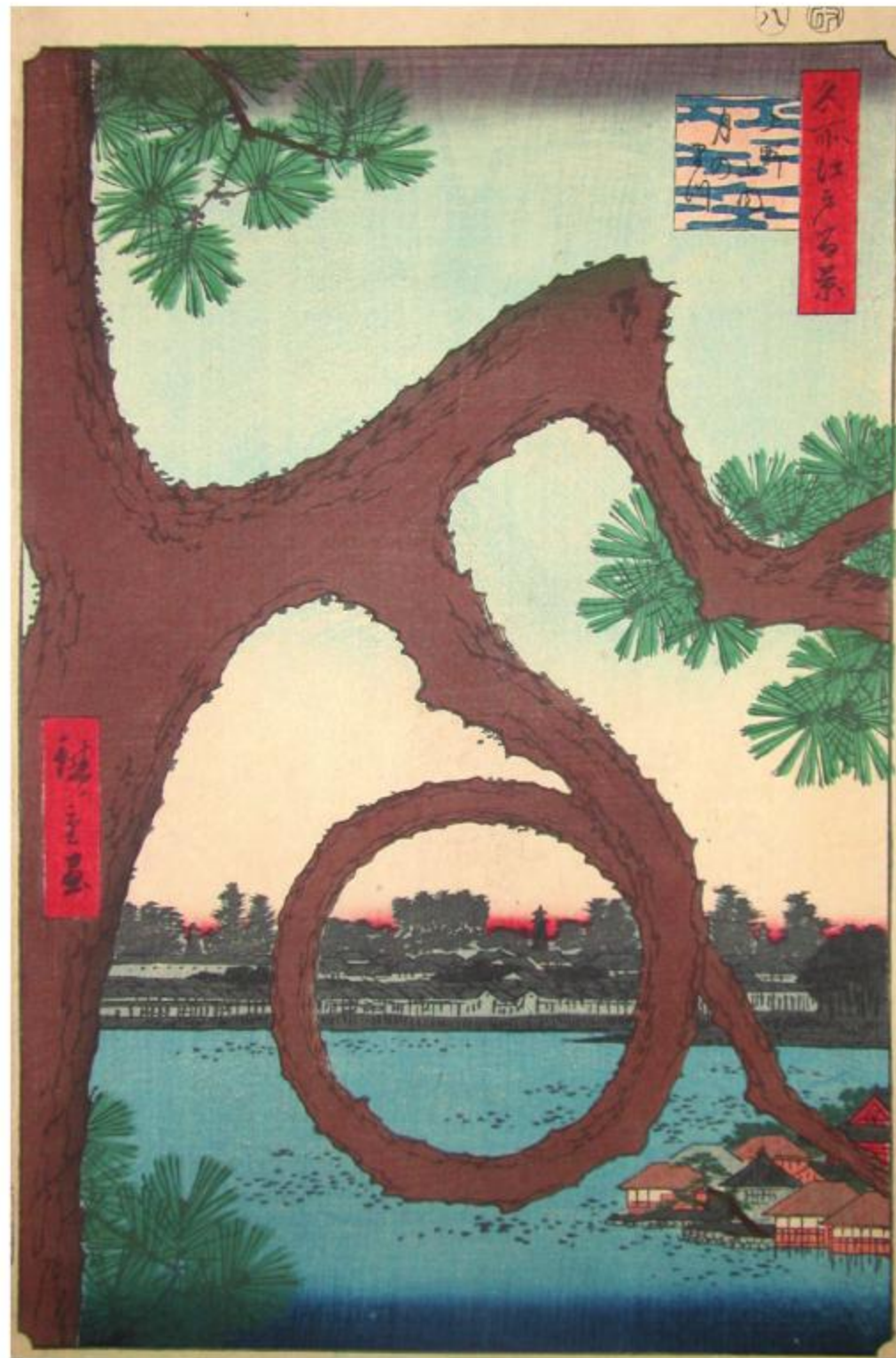
Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6056



Moon Pine, Ueno

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857

Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP1580



Maple Trees at Mama
100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857
Publisher: Uwoei
Seal: Aratame
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. #: JP6051



Yamashita in Ueno
100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1858
Publisher: Uwoei
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. # JP111241



Kinryuzan Temple & Azuma Bridge
100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1857
Publisher: Uwoei
Seal: Aratame
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. #: JP111240



Sanno Festival at Kojimachi I-chome

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1856

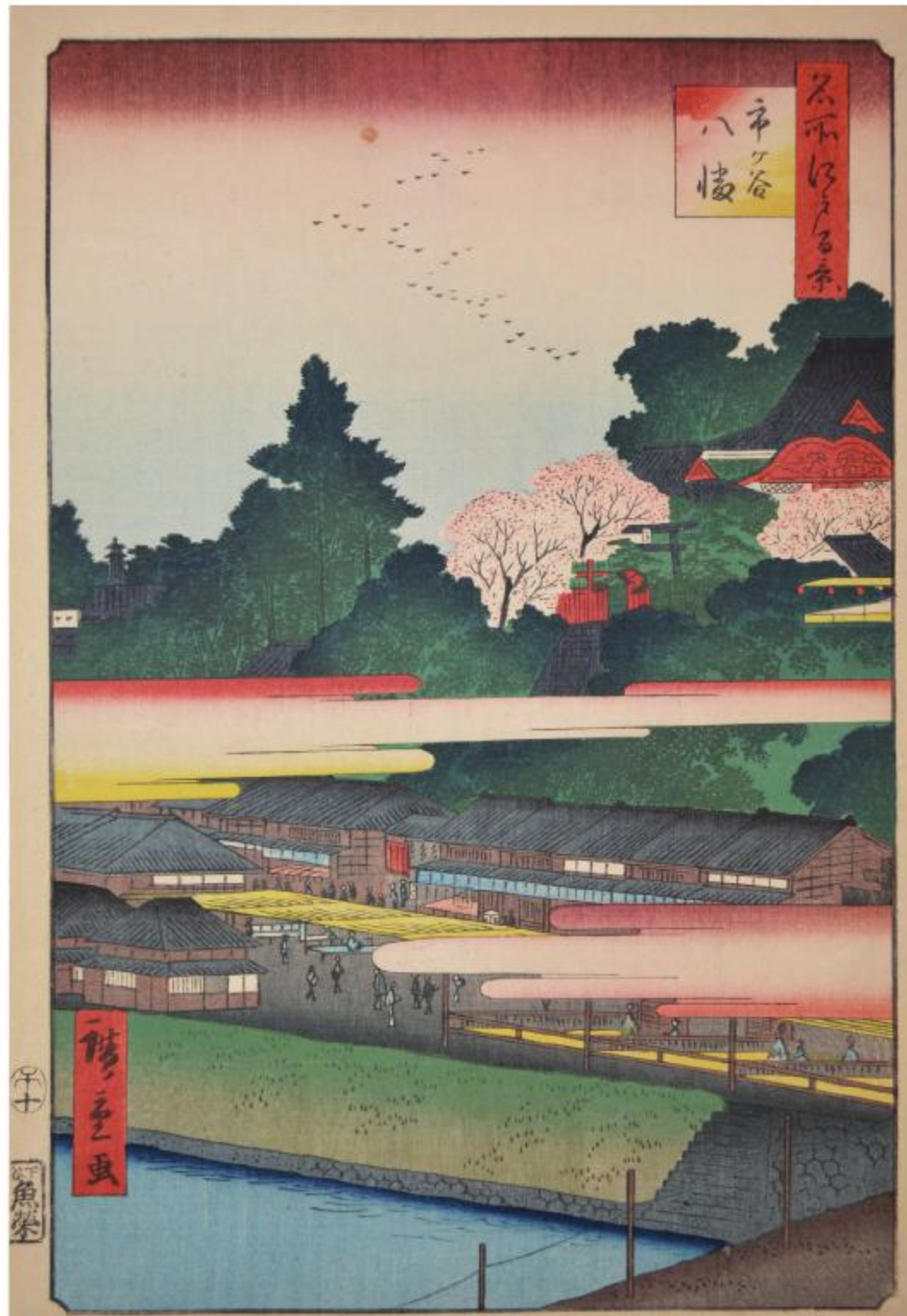
Publisher: Uwoei

Seal: Aratame

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP111239



Ichigaya Hachiman Shrine

100 Famous Views of Edo

Date: 1858

Publisher: Uwoei

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP111242



Wave Off Satta Beach, Suruga Province
36 Views of Fuji

Date: 1858
Publisher: Tsuruya
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. # JP6048



The Sumida River, Edo
36 Views of Fuji

Date: 1858
Publisher: Tsutaya
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. # JP6091



Sukiyagashi at Toto
36 Views of Fuji

Date: 1858
Publisher: Tsutaya
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. # JP6088



Koganei, Musashi Province

36 Views of Fuji

Date: 1858

Publisher: Tsutaya

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6057



Koganegahara, Shimosa
36 Views of Fuji

Date: 1858
Publisher: Tsutaya
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. # JP6087



Hakone Lake
36 Views of Fuji

Date: 1858
Publisher: Tsutaya
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. #: JP6094



Sunset Hill at Meguro, Edo
36 Views of Fuji

Date: 1858
Publisher: Tsutaya
Signed: Hiroshige ga
Size: O-ban
ref. # JP6095



Shichirigahama, Sagami Province

36 Views of Fuji

Date: 1858

Publisher: Tsutaya

Signed: Hiroshige ga

Size: O-ban

ref. #: JP6092



Fuji River in Winter

Date: c.1842
Publisher: Sanoki
Seal: Ichiryusai
Signed: Hiroshige hitsu
Size: Kakemono
ref. # JP6053

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